

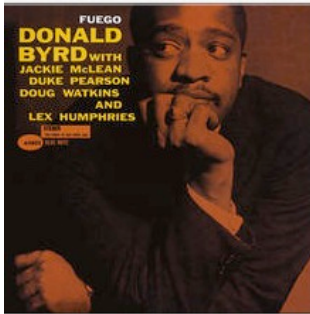


photo credit: Phil Bray

Donald Byrd

(December 9, 1932 – February 4, 2013)

Like many other great artist, I grew up on Donald Byrd. His style and range on trumpet



and flugelhorn always seem to fit the social of the times. When he played love, you felt the love, and when he was radical, you knew that as well. Donald always had a beautiful way of expressing himself with his feelings leading the way. Many times being a avid listening fan of the now infamous WCHD/WJZZ-Detroit, Donald was in the listing as part of a long track of jazz cuts

during the night listening pleasure. What intrigued me about Donald was his boldness to play anywhere at anytime. This boldness (even though not known at the time) was sorely needed.



I missed Donald when he began to slow up on his musical output and when I heard he was gone, a piece of me went with him. They had the funeral just a few blocks from my home and as much as I wanted to pay my respects, I understood why I could not. I guess



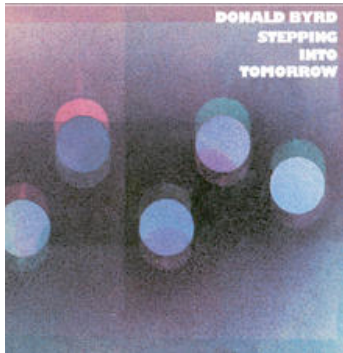
Chris Rock made a good point of what ever music you were listening to when you started getting laid, you will listen to that music the rest of your life. For me it was Jazz and Donald was one of the main artists in that jazz listing and collection. As many greats before him I hope he is in heaven playing with them.

Their only question would be “Man what took you so long? Here grab that flugel and get on it.”

Donald’s music got me over many trials and tribulations. During those days directions were mixed up and Jazz gave me the time to see clearer and open my mind. I can say Mr. Byrd and his fellow comrades kept me off of drugs even though some of those cuts sounded like they were on them. I guess you had to be to make those instruments sound like they did. A level few have been able to match to this day. And that is ok as Jazz is ever evolving into different sounds and melodies that even today, sounds pretty darn good.



Donald Byrd made an important contribution to music education. Photograph: Andrew Lepley/Redferns



Before the cars, girls, hobbies and travel it was Jazz. Second only to God himself I have thanked him a many times for it. Some say few understand Jazz and that is fine with me. What they fail to realize is that Jazz is not to be studied to the point of understanding. Just join the flow and enjoy the ride no matter if you are a player or a fan. Donald and many others understood this and played for our enjoyment even when the money was not that great if at all. I will just say thanks Donald for your contribution. You have made the ride well worth it and I will never forget it.

Bill Sommerville